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JUN 22 1931  
U. S. Department of Agriculture

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, July 3, 1931

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Food for the Fourth." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics,  
U. S. D. A.

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"If you were going to have company for the Fourth of July, what would you serve for dinner?" I asked the Menu Specialist.

"I am going to have company for the Fourth and I already have the dinner planned that I intend to serve. My mother-in-law is to be visiting us at that time, and, as she is one of the nicest people in this world, I've planned my meal especially for her. She was born and bred in New England, you know, Aunt Sammy. Her family home was in Providence where all the relatives and ancestors way back have lived. My father-in-law is also a staunch New Englander. But their son picked out a wife who hailed from Missouri! That's the way it goes, doesn't it?"

"Go on," I said, "Tell me some more. I'm quite as interested in learning about your family, as I am in dinner menus."

"But I'm talking about dinners. All that I've been telling you was just by way of explaining the menus I have for you today. Yes, menus, spelled with an S. I have two of them and your listeners can choose which one they prefer. Their choice, I'm sure, will depend on what part of the country they live in. I just learned the other day what the best families in Providence, or Bradford, Massachusetts, or Nashua, New Hampshire, or anywhere else up in that region consider the proper food to eat to celebrate this day of our independence. As for the second menu, my friends in the South will probably prefer that. And so, I expect, will mid-westerners like myself.

"To the traditional New Englander, salmon and peas spells the Fourth. He would turn down a steak or a roast or a turkey on this date for his salmon and peas. So for our first menu let's write salmon in big letters for the main dish. If you happen to live anywhere where you can buy the salmon fresh, I suggest boiled salmon with egg sauce. To keep the fish from falling to pieces in the cooking water, boil it in a cheesecloth bag. If you can't get fresh salmon. Otherwise, serve a nice, piping hot dish of scalloped salmon. Along with the fish serve New Green Peas; New Potatoes with Parsley Butter; and Mashed Yellow Squash. Then, Crisp Lettuce Salad; Iced Tea to drink; and, for dessert, Ice Cream with Fresh Fruit Sauce; and White Cake with Chocolate Icing. There, I almost forgot to mention the candies. Red, white and blue candies.



The children will enjoy them especially.

What to use for a centerpiece? A simple bowl of flowers rather than something that is too elaborate and fancy. That delicate and graceful flower, columbine, which grows in most parts of the United States, and blooms in the three shades -- red, white and blue, makes a lovely and suitable centerpiece for this occasion. You may remember that there was at one time a great deal of agitation in favor of choosing columbine for our national flower. It is named for Columbus, and blooms, as I said, in the colors of the flag.

What's that? Somebody wants me to read that first menu over again? All right. Cape Cod folks and Back Bay homemakers, this was inspired by you. Boiled Fresh Salmon or Scalloped Canned Salmon; New Green Peas; New Potatoes with Parsley Butter; Mashed Yellow Squash; Crisp Lettuce Salad; Iced Tea; and for dessert, Ice Cream with Crushed Fresh Fruit and White Cake with Chocolate Icing. And Candies -- red, white and blue.

"Back in Missouri," said the Menu Specialist, "and also farther south, chicken is popular for the Fourth. For family parties, for special guests and for picnic dinners, fried chicken is a Special treat. That is, provided that it is properly fried. I know of a most excellent recipe for fried chicken. Do you think your radio friends would like to have it?"

I assured the Menu Specialist that both my friends and myself would be pleased to have that recipe. And I told her that I was sure chicken would go to the spot, no matter what the weather was on the Fourth. Betty Jane says she thinks it will rain anyway. My memory seems to indicate that it rained every Fourth when I was a child. If it didn't pour during the day, thunder was sure to start early in the evening when my uncle and big brother were just getting ready to shoot off the skyrockets.

So, for the second menu, we'll have fried chicken for the main dish; Then, Cream Chicken Gravy; Mashed Potatoes; Buttered Greens; Baby Lima Beans; Tomato and Watercress Salad. The dessert will be the same as in the New England menu. Yes, ice cream and cake. Fortunately, ice cream is the great American dish, a favorite from Oregon to Maine. "And also in Missouri," adds the Menu Specialist. Ice Cream with Crushed Fruit Sauce for dessert. White Cake with Chocolate Icing. And patriotic candies.

Are you ready for the recipe for fried chicken? Here it is.

Select a young, plump chicken. Remove the pin feathers, wash the chicken, draw, and cut into pieces suitable for serving. Then wipe dry. Sprinkle the pieces well with salt and pepper and rub well with flour. In a heavy skillet, heat a generous quantity of well-flavored fat to just below the smoking point. Put in the larger and thicker pieces of chicken so that each piece will be surrounded by the hot fat. Partly cover the skillet and watch closely to prevent scorching. Turn the chicken as soon as it becomes a golden brown. Reduce the heat, cook it until tender and drain on paper to absorb the excess fat. As the larger pieces are removed, add the smaller ones and all will be finished about the same time.

To make the gravy, use some of the fat in the skillet, flour and milk.





The proportions are 2 tablespoons of fat to 2 tablespoons of flour to 1 and 1/2 cups of milk. Mix and cook the fat and flour in the skillet a few minutes, stirring constantly. Then add the milk and cook until thickened. Add more salt and pepper if needed. Sprinkle finely chopped parsley over the gravy and serve hot with the chicken.

For the buttered greens you might have chopped kale. Or you might have Swiss chard. Swiss chard, you know, belongs to the same family as beets, but the edible part is all in the leaves and fleshy leaf stalks -- or midribs, as a botanist would call them. Since the stalks require longer cooking than the leafy part, strip them out from the rest, cut the stalks in inch-long pieces, and cook for 10 minutes in boiling salted water. Then add the green leaves and cook for a few minutes longer until both are tender. Drain, season with melted butter, pepper and salt. Serve with vinegar or lemon juice.

Monday: "Poison Ivy."





HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

July 6, 1931. (Monday)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Subject: "Poisonous Plants." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry,  
U. S. D. A.

Bulletin available: "Poison Ivy and Poison Sumac and Their Eradication."  
Farmers' Bulletin No. 1166.

When Uncle Ebenezer came home to supper last night he was disturbed and put out about something. He had been down looking over the back lot where he has hoped to have a playground for the children in this neighborhood. Several of the fathers have agreed to build some simple equipment and to look after the place. But Uncle Ebenezer had found a patch of poison ivy flourishing there--- running up trees, over fences and along the ground. Something had to be done about that before the playground project could go farther.

"Poison ivy is a serious subject to you, Ebenezer, isn't it?" inquired Uncle Silas with a grin.

Then to me he said, "It all dates back to Ebenezer's first acquaintance with that weed - to a picnic we boys once had down at Long's Pond. Ebenezer and Joe Rogers got to scrapping over the sandwiches and pretty soon both of them were rolling together on the ground kicking and punching. They happened to roll right into an ivy patch without realizing it. You should have seen Ebenezer the next day. His face looked worse than mumps and measles put together."

"Yes," said Uncle Ebenezer, glumly, as if the memory was still fresh in his mind, "and that scalawag of a Joe Rogers never had even a touch of poisoning. That's the way with that pesky plant--a dangerous and painful dose to some of us and no trouble at all to others. I'll not sponsor any children's playground where it is growing."

Many people have their first acquaintance with poison ivy, which is also called poison oak--and with its relative, poison sumac, by being painfully poisoned. It pays, therefore, if you are going out into the country this summer--camping, picnicking, hiking, or even just driving--to learn what these plants look like and avoid them. It is also helpful to know how to prevent or treat poisoning.

Poison ivy, in one form or another, is found in almost all sections of the United States. It may be a vine, it may be a shrub or a low plant, but it has distinguishing characteristics by which you can always tell it. Shiny leaves consisting of three leaflets. Remember that. The old saying was,



"Leaflets three, let it be." Better teach the children that little verse before they start wandering off bare-footed, or bare-legged into the fields.

Late in the summer the plant can be identified by its white, waxy berries, which look something like mistletoe berries. In the spring, when the leaves first unfold, they are red. As they grow and the mild weather advances they become green. Then, in the autumn, they take on beautiful shades of scarlet and orange. Quite often people, not knowing the poisonous character of this plant, have picked the colored leaves for ornamental purposes. I remember some college girls out in Oregon who were giving an autumn dance and went out to gather some bright foliage for decoration. The first guests were much amazed to find the whole first floor decorated with great bowls of reddish poison oak. I say poison oak because that's what the Oregonians I've known always call it. But as I've said, this is simply another name for the poison ivy plant which grows in several forms.

Where does it grow? It flourishes in the woods and in the open. It is especially abundant along fence rows, at the edges of paths and roadways. Last Sunday, driving along a road outside of Washington, I saw quantities of it climbing up trunks of trees. Along roadsides and in open fields, it is practically impossible to eradicate it completely. But it is a good idea to destroy small patches in gardens, along backyard fences, and near frequented paths where people will come in contact with it.

The ivy is especially poisonous during the period of thrifty growth and the probability of being poisoned appears to be greatest in hot weather, when the skin is damp with perspiration. It is also a well-known fact that smoke from the burning plants carries the poison and may cause serious attacks. The poison is an oily substance that may be carried on the air. The merest trace of it on the skin can cause severe inflammation. The symptoms of ivy poisoning may appear within a few hours, or they may be delayed for several days. After the first sensation of burning or itching, blisters begin to form, which spread rapidly, and in severe attacks may become ulcerated. They gradually dry up as the acute stage passes.

Here are some helpful "Do's" and "Don'ts" on ivy and sumac poisoning issued by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

If you know that you may be exposed to poison ivy, have your druggist fix up one of two solutions I'm going to tell you about. Apply the solution freely to exposed parts of the body and let it dry. Either solution is likely to neutralize the poison from ivy or sumac before it does serious injury.

Solution Number One is made up of 5 parts of ferric chloride, in 95 parts of a half-and-half mixture of water and glycerin. (Repeat)

Solution Number Two is one part of ferrous sulphate in 5 parts of water. (Repeat)

If you have been exposed to the plant you can often ward off an attack by coming home and washing the poison off the surface of the skin before it has had time to penetrate. Use strong kitchen or laundry soap and hot water.





Wash and rinse several times with an abundance of thick lather. Wash in running water or, if in a basin, change the water frequently.

After the poisoning appears, a 5 per cent solution of potassium permanganate is a good remedy to apply. It leaves a dark brown stain, but this will gradually wash off or its removal may be hastened with lemon juice.

For the inflammation, simple remedies such as local applications of cooking soda, or of Epsom salts and water are good. Use one or two heaping teaspoons of the soda or salts to a cup of water. Solutions of this kind may be applied with light bandages or clean cloths, which should be kept moist and changed or discarded frequently.

At night, clean and dry the poisoned surfaces and leave them exposed to the air. Don't bandage them tightly.

In the early stages do not use oily ointments. They dissolve and spread the poison. After the poison has run its course, use a mild ointment--zinc oxide for example, to promote healing.

There are many more facts that I'd like to tell you about. And I did mean to say more about poison sumac, that small shrub or tree growing in marshes or low, damp lands.

But we have a fine menu today and it is time now for me to turn to that. And, anyway, you can read about these plants in a bulletin called "Poison Ivy and Poison Sumac", which is ready for you whenever you want a copy. The bulletin contains illustrations that will help you distinguish these different plants.

We have a vegetable dinner for today. With all the attractive fresh food in our gardens and in the markets at this time of year, fresh vegetable plates can be served frequently.

A special treat today for the main dish--MUSHROOMS. Either creamed or broiled will suit the menu. Yes, and I'll give you a recipe for them tomorrow--maybe both recipes, or "all two", as the French say.

Pencils ready? The menu for the fresh vegetable dinner is:

Broiled or Creamed Mushrooms on Toast; Broccoli or some other green vegetable; Whole Pickled Beets; Stuffed Celery, and Fresh Diced Pineapple.

Here are a few important features to notice about that menu:

First. The variety in color--always desirable in any meal, but especially easy to achieve in an all-vegetable plate. Along with the mushrooms you see, we have green broccoli, red beets, white celery, stuffed perhaps with yellow cheese, and so on.

Second. The variety in flavor and texture.

Third. A tart flavor provided by the beets to contrast with the blandness of the mushrooms on toast.



Fourth. The simplicity of this meal and every dish in it. The best food is often the simplest. And, in summer housewives should avoid fancy, elaborate and complicated dishes that require long hours in a hot kitchen.

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Tomorrow we'll chat about the new green cook book. And we'll have the two recipes for using mushrooms as a main dish. Please don't forget to provide yourself with a pencil.



